

THE MASTER FIXER UPPER

A wrongfully convicted prisoner returns home after ten years, eager to restart his life, but a bitter family challenges his hope for restoration.

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EXT. HIGHWAY-DAY

Along the wooded two lane road a traffic sign says "Amosville Prison Next Right".

EXT. OUTSIDE GATES OF STATE PRISON-DAY

Massive solid wood and metal prison gates tower over federal and state flags flying outside the prison entrance.

A brash BUZZER splits the air. The massive gates shudder and reverberate with a deep MOAN as they slowly open. Tall, thin RANDALL MCCLAIN (28) in crispy clean jeans and tee shirt stands alone, dwarfed by the opening.

Randall turns as a prison security car jets up and a car door opens. The WARDEN emerges. The Warden addresses Randall briefly and shakes his hand, then motions the DRIVER to retrieve a heavy black duffle bag from the trunk. It is handed to Randall. Randall salutes and proceeds out. The gate MOANS, closing behind him.

EXT. HIGHWAY-DAY

Randall trudges along the two lane weighed down by his bag. The traffic sign on the other side of the road reading "Amosville Prison next right" is visible behind him. At the sound of LOUD MUSIC, he looks back at a vehicle coming up from behind. As it gets close, he turns, holding his thumb out. He is pelted with eggs and RAUCOUS LAUGHTER as a truck full of TEENAGERS roars by.

TEENAGER

(yell from truck)
Good luck, loser!

As he marches on resolutely, Randall tries to flick the slime and broken shells off his bag and clothing.

EXT. HOUSE ON EDGE OF RURAL TOWN-DAY

Randall climbs the steps to the porch of a once grand, but now dilapidated, old home. Weeds grow profusely in the front yard. Randall's clothing is now wrinkled and ringed with muddy creek water marks and dried egg. He leans over to give a big hug to his GRANDMA (75). Grandma is as threadbare and faded as her dress. She remains motionless, seated stiffly in her rocking chair.

RANDALL

Love ya Grandma! Great to be home!

Unsmiling, Grandma sighs, averts her eyes, and rocks clutching a handmade Raggedy Ann doll to her stomach.

GRANDMA

You look a mess.

RANDALL

Going to make things right.

GRANDMA

Nothing can be fixed here. All wore out.

RANDALL

Where's Joe?

GRANDMA

Your brother's down in Still House Hollow. Be here soon enough looking for a handout. He already ate up the charity food box for the month.

RANDALL

He's not working?

GRANDMA

That night the law caught up with you, he busted up his leg falling over a cliff. Hid out for over a year instead of getting the bone set. So senseless. Can never be rehabilitated.

RANDALL

Understand.

GRANDMA

Just what do you understand, Randall?

He looks around and motions with his hand.

RANDALL

Why the place is so run down.

GRANDMA

Listen here, the whole community's not recovered from the shock of seeing our crown prince getting himself hauled off to prison.

Randall leaps up, and begins jerking weeds out of the ground. Pausing, he shakes a fistful for emphasis.

RANDALL

I never shot at anyone. And certainly not at a sheriff. My hunting rifle disappeared long before that night.

GRANDMA

I know. But then why did God do this? You, the brightest boy around with a great future ahead, suddenly snatched away? And your younger brother, a grown man now, still hanging on my apron strings?

Randall sits on the stairs near her feet.

RANDALL

Could never understand it. So thought of God's mercy instead. Then got a glimpse of the future, of this very day. Saw myself coming back and rebuilding. Had that hope.

GRANDMA

Hopeless now. Can't bring back what's gone.

RANDALL

You used to call God the Almighty. Said He only asks us boys to volunteer our lunch, just those few loaves and fishes, nothing more. But then God would create the miracle.

Grandma looks more grim and shakes her head.

GRANDMA

Nothing left. No sandwich in the lunch bucket, not even crumbs for breakfast.

JOE MCCLAIN (26) gaunt and scruffy, awkwardly limps up and grasps the porch railing. He eyes Randall's bag.

JOE

How's our star quarterback doing now? What's in the bag, a trophy?

RANDALL

Great to see ya, Bro! There are surprises in there.

JOE

Don't like surprises. Can't play dodgeball no more. No more fun and games.

RANDALL

Sorry you got injured.

The gate creaks and they turn to look.

JOE

Well, looka here. Breakfast is delivered... Man, I'm hungry.

NAN DONOVAN (23) closes the sagging picket gate and approaches quickly, carrying something in her right hand.

NAN

Hello? Is that you Mr. Randall McClain?

RANDALL

Bet you're one of those Donovan girls, all grown up now.

She pauses for a quick handshake.

NAN

Yes Sir, I'm Nan. Sorry about the rush, late for work. Mrs. McClain, I brought you another chocolate colored egg. So its "hi and bye" fellas.

Nan hands the egg to Grandma and turns to leave.

GRANDMA

She has the most wonderful chickens. Would I love to have a hen that lays eggs like this.

NAN

Ma'am, after I finish my shift, I'll bring you your own hen. Catch up with y'all then. Bye now.

Nan swiftly exits.

JOE

Ma, when the chicken gets here,
you can fry me up some.

RANDALL

No Joe. That hen is going to be a
pet for Grandma.

GRANDMA

Need a safe place to put my hen. A
chicken needs to be locked up at
night, or the varmints'll get it.

Randall stands, picking up the duffle bag. It clanks.
Randall puts his arm around Joe and starts moving him
toward the corner of the house. Joe is stiff.

RANDALL

Come round back with me. Time to
help with that surprise.

JOE

What do you mean?

RANDALL

Remember our old fort in the back
yard?

Grandma leans over the porch rail and yells into the
brothers' conversation. They keep up a three way
conversation by yelling back even as they walk away.

GRANDMA

Your grandpa David made that fort
for you boys.

JOE

It got flattened by the wind.

RANDALL

We're going to repair it. Make a
chicken coop for Grandma.

JOE

How we gonna do that?

RANDALL

Got tools. Got some peanut butter
here for your breakfast.

Joe starts laughing and Randall smiles.

EXT. OVERGROWN BACKYARD-DAY

Joe sits on the end of a cantilevered beam eating peanut butter out of a jar with a stick. The beam holds up one side of the roof of the shed while Randall nails. Joe throws the empty jar into the weeds.

JOE

Ate all the peanut butter, sorry.

RANDALL

Weren't we rotten for snickering about all those Donovan kids jammed in their trailer? So wrong to make fun of people being poor.

JOE

Poorer now. Couple years back, an engine fell on Old Man Donovan. Squashed him good but he survived.

RANDALL

We will have to go visit and see if we can't give a hand.

JOE

Donovan didn't help you none. Heard he testified you had a Remington that shot seven millimeter bullets and that your truck was parked nearby that night of the shooting.

RANDALL

Yeah, I was mad about it at first, since I was home studying at the time. But Donovan's an honest man. Then I remembered how I started ignoring my little brother those last two years of high school. Had some long talks with God about my selfishness.

JOE

You really think God will forgive?

RANDALL

Yes, hope you can forgive me too.

Randall reaches for his bag. Joe flinches, losing his balance, falls off the beam. The shed roof CRASHES down.

RANDALL

What happened?

JOE

Scared me.

Joe points at the duffle bag.

JOE

Where did ya get that bag of tricks?

Randall continues working, trying to shoulder the shed roof up again. He grunts with the effort.

RANDALL

Got it from the Warden. Did well in prison carpentry classes.

Joe levers the roof back up and lays on the beam. Randall hammers LOUDLY and fast like rifle shots. Then pauses.

JOE

(nervously)

Ya have an axe or a weapon in that tool bag?

RANDALL

No, need one?

JOE

Just checking. There's something I need to tell ya.

RANDALL

Fire away.

JOE

Sort of what I wanted to say. I was the one that stole your gun.

RANDALL

I figured. What? You needed to practice shooting? You've always been a lousy shot.

Randall laughs, Joe's laugh is more hesitant.

JOE

You knew already? Sorry. Don't have that gun no more. Buried it.

RANDALL

Can't have one now anyway.

Randall straightens an old chain link gate and wires it in place to enclose the chicken area.

RANDALL

Think no more of it, Bro. Funny how sometimes God clamps us in a vice so he can bend us back into shape.

Randall kicks the bottom of the bent gate. Joe lines up rocks to border a path to the coop. Randall joins him.

JOE

I wasted a lot of time and Grandma's money trying to stop thinking bout things I'd done.

RANDALL

Help me out now, Joe. Be my partner. Let's start a handy man business together, and reconstruct this whole broken down mess of a town.

JOE

Can't•••.

Joe is sitting on the ground and nods toward his leg.

RANDALL

There's a lot of things you can do with a partner. Can sit on the ground when you have to. You can learn to install flooring, do plumbing, baseboards, painting. You can do all the design work... you still draw don't you?

JOE

Not in a long time. But I could always draw better than you!

RANDALL

See what I mean? We'll start here and revitalize Grandma's house. Everyone will be so impressed they'll hire the McClain Brothers.

JOE

Don't know. A lot of hard work.

RANDALL

Exactly. We'll get all buff.

They flex their arms and laugh like kids.

JOE

Go ahead, you do it. But your
business needs a better name.
uMcClain" don't have a good ring
to it round here. Mostly my fault.

A farm bell clangs nearby.

JOE

Grandma rang the dinner bell.
Haven't heard that in a long time.

Randall retrieves the empty peanut butter jar and throws
it to Joe, who snatches it from the air.

RANDALL

Nice! We'll use it for nails and
screws.

INT. GRANDMA'S KITCHEN-DAY

The three sit around steaming bowls of stew on Grandma's
table and Randall moves first to grasp the others' hands
in prayer.

RANDALL

Lord God, thank you for redeeming
and restoring us. Help us to be
your hands, feet and heart in the
renewal of those around us. Thank
you for our daily bread.
In Christ's name. Amen

JOE

Sure smells good.

RANDALL

It's a feast. Grandma, thought you
said there was nothing to eat?

GRANDMA

Decided to feed the hungry workmen
knocking together my chicken shed,
so made biscuits from the flour
I'd been saving up. So then the
pastor's wife surprised me with
this stew. Said she saw the three
of us together again on the porch.

JOE

Ma, it's not a shed, it's going
tobe a DE-luxe chicken condo.

I'm even gonna make a weather vane
for it out of some scrap metal.

RANDALL

That'll be a nice touch, Joe.
Next we'll patch up Grandma's
garden. Time to plant soon.

JOE

Got no cash to buy seeds.

Randall digs into his pockets, and plonks a quarter, two
dimes and a penny on the table.

RANDALL

That's all I got left.

Joe, pauses, then digs around in his shoe. He carefully
spreads out two very tightly folded and dirty dollar
bills on the table. Grandma scoops up the money.

GRANDMA

It'll do for some seed packets
from the Co-op. I've got some
sunflower seeds tucked away as
well. Look at these beauties.

She picks up the Raggedy Ann doll, splits open a seam
with her fork. Out tumbles a pile of huge sunflower
seeds. Joe reaches for one but she lightly slaps his
hand.

RANDALL

That's for planting, Joe. We'll
eat sunflower seeds come fall.

GRANDMA

Maybe you boys get some of the old
farm equipment running?

RANDALL

Don't know much about fixing
machinery, but willing to try.

JOE

I learnt how to mend fences.

GRANDMA

And its high time.

A knock on the door.

JOE

Come-on in.

Nan enters carrying a cardboard box which she opens on the floor. Inside, a hen, sits on a clutch of eggs. After Grandma oohs and aahs, Nan closes it. She is handed a bowl of stew and a chair pulled out for her.

NAN

Her name's Ruth. All nine eggs underneath should hatch soon.

JOE

Chickens will be running all over.

GRANDMA

Catching bugs and fertilizing my garden. And the eggs, such a blessing.

RANDALL

Nan, I'd like to come visit your father, if he'd see me. Want to give you a hand with some chores.

JOE

Me too.

NAN

I'm sure he'd enjoy seeing both you boys. Been praying for ya.

RANDALL

Heard he got hurt.

NAN

In a wheelchair now.

RANDALL

Sorry to hear it.

NAN

Dad wanted me to remind you, Joe, to haul away that junker you left in our field. Wasn't it Randy's truck once upon a time?

Joe turns to Randall.

JOE

I was just using it for awhile, least 'til it stopped running.

RANDALL

My old truck's still around? Should be a classic by now. Let's recover her.

NAN

Dad would love to advise you on that sorta thing. He adores old Fords.

JOE

We'll be needing a good work truck now that Randall and I are partners in a handyman business. I'm doing the design part. Can already see a beautiful new paint job on that old Ford.

NAN

Fellas, have you named your business?

RANDALL

Thinking we'll call it "Master Fixer Upper". We are apprenticed to a Master Carpenter, who wrote the book on renovation.

Grandma smiles for the first time, a great beaming smile. Standing behind them, she grabs both Randall and Joe in a giant bear hug.

GRANDMA

Love these boys! The Almighty has miraculously revived our family.

Grandma roughs their hair, then looks at Randall and wrinkles her nose.

GRANDMA

Randall, go now, jump in the shower and I'll wash up those clothes.